2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LEGEND OF LINGO PEN

I. The Shrine of Lingo Pen

IN the wild wooded country at the top of the hills, as you go up from Antagarh towards Amabera, is the little village of Semurgaon, and in the forest that surrounds the village, on a cliff overlooking a tiny stream, is the shrine of Lingo Pen who was once honoured by the Gond and Pardhan all over the Central Provinces. Today, as a living force, his cult is probably confined to the north of Bastar, and to the Muria, to whom he has given many deities and the most cherished of their institutions.

In Semurgaon, Lingo's shrine, a substantial thatched hut, is maintained by the Muria, but his priest is a Pardhan—Deo Singh of the Koreti Nang sept—who sings and plays before him on the dhusir-fiddle which is also Lingo's dwelling-place. The shrine is not unworthy of this venerable deity, the lord of all the aboriginal gods of Bastar. Under a spacious roof lies the Anga of Lingo suspended on a swing and sheltered by a great screen of peacock's feathers. At the four corners of the swing are bunches of the same feathers, and at the Anga's side is Lingo's *jiwa* or soul, a piece of iron like a ploughshare wrapped in grass. Round Lingo's neck is a bell, his son Netturgundi. To the right is his throne, a large cup-shaped stone. Above hangs an iron drum and a hunting-horn. From the roof are suspended pots containing Palo, the sacred cloth, and Lingo's two horses, crooked sticks adorned with feathers on which the mediums ride in ecstasy before him.

Every three years there is a great festival at Semurgaon, when Lingo is brought out of his shrine and is worshipped with pigs, goats and bulls. From all over the Jhorian, Amabera and Antagarh Parganas and from Kanker State come the pilgrims bringing their gods with them, 'for Lingo is Raja and Bastar is his kingdom'. At Alor also, in a clearing in the heart of the jungle, is a four-foot pillar of mahua wood in honour of Lingo, and every three years there is a festival. Indeed throughout northern Bastar you may find Lingo's relatives and hear his legend, a token of the strength and distribution of his cult.[1]

II. The Lingo Legend in the Central Provinces

Later in this chapter I present several versions of the Lingo legend as it is current among the Muria of Bastar, where its outstanding feature is its account of the founding of the ghotul. But first let us consider some other versions of the story which have been recorded in the Central Provinces.

The first of these versions was taken down by the Rev Stephen Hislop from a 'Pardhan priest of the Gond at Nagpur' in the Gondi tongue, and was later edited, translated and published by Sir Richard Temple, in 1866.[2] Unfortunately we have no indication of the distribution of the legend, nor indeed whether—in the form recorded by Hislop—it was known to any other

[1] There is a shrine to Lingal Pen at Chorpal in the Dantewara Tahsil, but I do not know whether the Maria here identify him with the Lingo of the north.

[2] S. Hislop, *Papers relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces*. Edited by R. Temple, 1866. Large extracts from Temple's translation were reproduced by Bishop Eyre Chatterton in his *The Story of Gondwana* (London, 1916) and many of Temple's notes used without acknowledgement. A brief summary is given by Russell and Hiralal, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 478.